Volume 20, No. 7 R5685-4 July 1992

FOCUS

The monthly magazine of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

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POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Perspective

ISSN 0740-0195

PRICE $1.50

An Expanded International Affairs Program

The Cold War is over. Western Europe is reshaping itself. South Africa is coming out of isolation. In short, a new world is being born. These momentous changes, combined with the black community's increased political and economic power and professional expertise, give black Americans a unique opportunity to help shape U.S. foreign policy and play a positive role in the creation of a "New World Order." An expanded emphasis on international affairs will not detract from our urgent need to reform and refurbish many domestic policies. In fact, our international and domestic policies overlap on many different fronts.

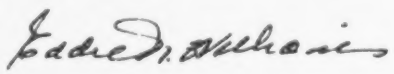
Despite the ending of the Cold War—which robbed the world, and especially the United States, of human and material resources—and notwithstanding progress in South Africa, there are still many urgent international issues which must be addressed. Increased humanitarian assistance to the poorer nations, refugee and immigration issues, human rights abuses, trade and investment, protecting the environment, international cooperation to conquer AIDS and illegal drugs, arms races, and debilitating regional conflicts will continue to challenge governments and citizens everywhere. These problems can only be solved through international cooperation.

The Joint Center, with the support of the MacArthur Foundation, is moving to become a more significant force in international affairs by helping policymakers and citizens at large better understand the relationships between domestic and foreign policy and by helping black Americans play a greater role in the formulation and execution of American foreign policy. As a first step, we have asked fourteen distinguished foreign policy experts to serve on a Foreign Affairs Advisory Committee. And this summer, we engaged Kenneth Longmyer, a Foreign Service officer with extensive background in European affairs and public diplomacy, to be our first full-time director of international affairs.

Part of the agenda of the International Affairs Division will be to conduct research to discover the barriers which prevent blacks from participating in the foreign policy process. Through conferences, individual meetings, publications, and media appearances, we will assist members of the black community to increase their knowledge of international issues and to communicate their informed preferences to Congress and to the executive branch.

With our new resources we will be able to expand our ongoing international activities, including encouraging more young Americans to increase their interest in and knowledge of foreign affairs. In the process, we hope to persuade government officials to make greater use of the wealth of foreign policy expertise which already exists in the black community.

Without abandoning our well established and ongoing efforts in Africa, we will explore ways black Americans can bring their expertise and influence to bear on U.S. relations with Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. It is essential that the black community expand its foreign policy interests beyond Africa, because decisions made in Brussels, Tokyo, Jerusalem, and Mexico City not only will directly affect the welfare of all Americans, but will affect the peoples of other nations which we care about. ■



PRESIDENT

FOCUS
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The monthly magazine of the **Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies,** 1301 Pa. Ave., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20004 (202) 626-3500. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is a national, nonprofit, tax-exempt institution that conducts research on public policy issues of special concern to black Americans and promotes informed and effective involvement of blacks in the governmental process. Founded in 1970, the Joint Center provides independent and nonpartisan analyses through research, publication, and outreach programs. Opinions expressed in signed *FOCUS* articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. *FOCUS* is published monthly. $15.00 per year by JCPES, Inc.

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Welfare: Does Reform Equal Punishment?

Critics Charge That Cuts in Benefits and Reductions of Welfare Rolls by States in the Name of Reform Are Unreasonable and Punitive

by Retha Hill

Across the nation, in statehouses, city halls, and on the presidential campaign, the drumbeat for welfare "reform" is getting louder. Even before the Los Angeles riots gave greater voice to it, a debate was taking shape on what to do about America's welfare-dependent poor. On one side are the policymakers who believe welfare recipients must learn "new values" and should therefore receive less assistance in order to force more of them to work. On the other side are advocates for the poor who believe that Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) grants are too low to begin with and that forcing single mothers with young children to work is unreasonable.

AFDC is an outgrowth of a program established in the 1930s to support widows and their children. Over the last 60 years, it has become the main source of public support for poor single-parent families. Today, nearly five million families receive AFDC benefits at an annual cost of $20 billion.

In an effort to encourage adult AFDC recipients to participate in education and training programs that would lead to paid employment, Congress in 1988 enacted the JOBS program (Job Opportunity and Basic Skills). JOBS focuses on recipients with children over age three who may receive support for transportation, child care, and Medicaid coverage up to a year after obtaining work.

The Recession and Its Budget Squeeze

The rise in unemployment caused by the recession has resulted in a corresponding rise in demand for public assistance. The national jobless rate this past June was 7.8 percent, the highest in eight years, and unemployment is even worse in black and Latino communities (14.9 and 12.1 percent, respectively). There are 4.73 million families on AFDC today compared with 3.97 million two years ago (an increase of 16 percent), costing the federal and state governments nearly $2 billion more than in 1990. With the cost of basic AFDC support rising, there is little money for job training, transportation, or child care for single mothers who want to work.

The recession has also caused reductions in state revenues that have affected the poor in 40 states through cuts in AFDC benefits and general assistance, the welfare program for disabled single individuals and childless couples. In fiscal year 1991, 31 states froze benefits and nine more states cut them. In seven of those states—California, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, and the District of Columbia—the cuts have been severe.

The recession has hit California particularly hard. There the welfare caseload has grown four times faster than the state's general population, increasing by 12 percent in the past four years to include 2.3 million people. California's 9.5 percent unemployment rate is one of the nation's highest. To cut welfare costs, the state has placed an initiative on the November ballot that would deny any automatic increase in benefits to recipients who have more children. (California social service officials claim that 32 percent of welfare mothers bear additional children after they have begun receiving benefits.) According to a study by the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation which examined Ventura and Santa Clara counties, if the initiative passes, an estimated 250,000 additional children will go hungry and 84,000 families will become homeless.

There have been similar reductions in JOBS programs. Although Congress has mandated states to provide some mix of training and employment services, states cannot participate unless they also match the federal monies with their own funds. But many states have been unable to fully invest in these programs. The federal government allotted $1 billion this year for JOBS, but the states have only matched about 60 percent of that money, according to Julie Strawn of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The recession has forced even states with model JOBS programs—like California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), Massachusetts' Employment and Training Choices (ET), and New Jersey's Realizing Economic Achievement (REACH)—to reduce their scope drastically, in some cases opting to replace education and training with minimal, low-cost job search services.

Welfare Reform and Campaign Rhetoric

Many reformers want to break up a system that they believe has ruined families, created a permanent underclass of poor women and children, and fostered a culture of dependency. On the cutting edge of change is Wisconsin's Republican governor Tommy Thompson, who pioneered the welfare reform movement six years ago with the implementation of Learnfare, which reduced benefits to AFDC families whose teenagers did not stay in school.

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Ms. Hill is a reporter with *The Washington Post* who covers social issues in the Washington, D.C., area.

Welfare

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By the summer of 1993, Thompson will put into practice a sweeping new reform package that will award only half the normal benefit increase to welfare mothers when they bear a second child and will freeze or cap benefits for the third and subsequent children. (Medical coverage and food stamps would remain unaffected.) To make up for these lost benefits, Thompson argues, recipients should get jobs. "What we are trying to do is point out that the system is actually broken," he says. "My goal is to give people hope, the tools necessary to get off welfare, and to inculcate responsibility in people on welfare."

Not all of Thompson's proposals are seen by advocates for the poor as negative or punitive. For example, Wisconsin would also remove the requirement that one parent in a two-parent family have a work history and work less than 100 hours a month to qualify for AFDC—a requirement that is widely viewed as keeping very young couples from marrying. Furthermore, AFDC parents who work could keep more of their earned income before losing benefits.

The Bush administration is right in step with the reform parade. In his State of the Union address, the President pledged to reform welfare, and in April the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in line with the president's position, granted a waiver to Wisconsin permitting the state to depart from federal welfare rules. Subsequently, 20 other states have asked for similar waivers.

Attempts at approaching reform rationally have been clouded by presidential campaign politics, replete with scapegoating rhetoric and code words. Commenting recently on the fictional Murphy Brown television character, Vice President Dan Quayle seemed to speak for many conservatives who believe that people are poor or have children outside of wedlock because they are somehow not sufficiently steeped in "family values." There's nothing new in the vice president's comments. Attacking welfare recipients has been a sure way to score politically with white working- and middle-class voters throughout the 1980s.

At the same time, the Bush administration has made it increasingly difficult for poor women to plan the size of their families. Family planning clinics that receive federal funds are no longer allowed to mention abortion as an option, and some of the Reagan-Bush appointees on the Supreme Court have signaled their intentions to block a woman's right to an abortion (such as in the *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania* v. *Casey* decision this June). Meanwhile, federal research on new birth control methods has been minimal, and the Food and Drug Administration has been slow to approve innovative birth control techniques used successfully in other countries.

While the myth of the black "welfare queen" with numerous children lingers, the facts show a different picture. Blacks do not comprise the majority of AFDC recipients, but account for 39.7 percent, while whites make up 38.1 percent and Latinos 16.6 percent. And while 66 percent of the 13.6 million AFDC recipients are children, AFDC families generally have fewer children than typical non-welfare households. Seventy-two percent of welfare families have two or fewer children (42 percent have only one child).

Not to be perceived as too liberal on the issue, Democrat Bill Clinton, who has been less clear than George Bush on how he would change the welfare system has vowed "to put an end to welfare as we have come to know it." Clinton has voiced his support for JOBS, and he has promised that if elected, he would cut off public assistance to anyone still on the rolls after two years. Although the candidate boasts that an experimental welfare-to-work program in Arkansas, known as WORK, reduced welfare rolls by seven percentage points after the first three years of implementation, figures from the Arkansas Human Resources Department indicate that the number of aid recipients has actually grown by 12 percent since WORK has gone into effect.

Teaching Responsibility or Assigning Blame?

Donna Paluka, president of the New Jersey chapter of the National Organization of Women, opposes a proposal by black Democratic state assemblyman Wayne Bryant, which would ban increased grants in New Jersey to mothers who bear additional children. In Camden, the community Bryant represents in the state assembly, 50 percent of the families depend on welfare as their primary source of income. Bryant wants a recipient parent to work, even for only 15 hours a month, to earn the $64 she (or he) would be disallowed if another child were born while on welfare. Bryant's proposal would allow for additional money for job training and child care; require that teen mothers stay in school as a condition of receiving benefits; and allow couples to marry without fear of losing benefits. "We must have a system that says you must be responsible for your acts," says Bryant.

But Paluka contends that without full funding of welfare grants, especially when a woman has another child, "families are not going to be able to make ends meet and pay rent and then you are out. The whole movement seems to be a matter of trying to control people's behavior by hurting them or oppressing them, instead of being based on teaching responsibility in a positive way...I say, pay the people more annually who *haven't* had additional children." Advocates for the poor emphasize the need to examine the economic realities in a state with 9.2 percent unemployment before imposing employment regulations.

Carolyn Colvin, secretary of the Maryland Department of Human Resources and a single black mother herself, has proposed a more moderate approach. Under Colvin's plan, which has been federally approved, clients will see their grants decrease by 20 percent but will have an opportunity to "earn back" that money by proving that their children are in school and receive regular

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July 1992

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

Inside This Issue:

- A national survey of African Americans released by Home Box Office and the Joint Center reveals black attitudes on presidential politics and social issues.
- Mississippi mayor Unita Blackwell receives a MacArthur "genius" award.
- **Across the Nation** looks at black Democratic and Republican congressional nominees in Alabama and Virginia, and "Able" Mabel Thomas challenges John Lewis for his U.S. House seat in Georgia.

Survey Shows Black Disapproval of Bush

According to a survey released by the Joint Center and Home Box Office (HBO), black Americans are generally dissatisfied with President **GEORGE BUSH**'s leadership and the direction of the country. This presidential election year, when black voters represent a substantial share of the voting-age population in major states that may determine the outcome of the presidential election, their attitudes are of special significance. However, of the presidential hopefuls, Arkansas governor **BILL CLINTON** led the field with the support of 43 percent of those polled, followed by Bush with 13 percent and 14 percent for Texas billionaire **H. ROSS PEROT** who ended his undeclared presidential candidacy on July 16.

The field work for the poll was performed by OMNIFACTS, Inc. of Philadelphia which surveyed 750 individuals by telephone from June 22 to 30. The survey was conducted in connection with the Voices of the Electorate Town Meeting project. Voices of the Electorate, a two-phase project developed by the Alvin H. Perlmutter Independent Production Fund (IPF), will initially use local television stations and the Spanish-language network Univision to broadcast African American and Hispanic town meetings in nine cities across the country. Black and Latino citizens will discuss the issues that they want the presidential candidates to address in the 1992 campaign. In the second phase, two one-hour Voices of the Electorate specials produced by IPF will chronicle the town meetings. "The African American Voter" and "The Hispanic American Voter" will air on PBS on Sunday, September 20, and Monday, September 21. Presidential candidates will be offered an opportunity to respond to black and Hispanic concerns discussed during the town meetings. The following is a synopsis of some of the other findings in the HBO/Joint Center survey.

Partisanship and Ideology. Black Americans continue to identify strongly with the Democratic Party. Seventy-two percent identified themselves as Democrats, 23 percent as Independents, and 5 percent as Republicans. When the Independents were asked if they leaned to one major party or the other, 59 percent indicated that they leaned toward the Democratic Party. While identifying themselves as Democrats, most black Americans did not identify themselves as liberals as some might have expected. Thirty-three percent of those surveyed characterized themselves as conservative, 30 percent as moderate, and 29 percent as liberal. These are of course self-identifications and not necessarily consistent with any particular theoretical definition of liberal and conservative.

Disapproval of Bush and Dissatisfaction with the Nation's Direction. Eighty-eight percent of those surveyed expressed dissatisfaction with the direction the country was headed. This finding corresponded with a 77 percent disapproval rating for George Bush's job performance. Most disagreed with the Bush administration's assessment that the Great Society programs established during the Johnson administration in the 1960s have been the source of the nation's urban ills, and 71 percent of those surveyed blamed the Reagan and Bush administrations for the problems of the cities. Congress did not escape blame. There was a 66 percent disapproval rating for Congress. Accompanying this disapproval of Congress's job performance was a 65 percent support for term limitations.

Presidential Preference and Public Personalities. Those surveyed were asked if they could identify the four major candidates for president/vice-president—George Bush, Bill Clinton, H. Ross Perot, and **DAN QUAYLE**, and four major national black figures—Rev. **JESSE JACKSON,** Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff **COLIN POWELL,** Supreme Court Justice **CLARENCE THOMAS,** and Virginia Governor **L. DOUGLAS WILDER**. Those who could identify the eight, were asked to rate their feelings toward them.

President Bush and Vice President Quayle were evaluated very negatively by the survey respondents. Bush's favorable/unfavorable ratings were 28 percent/60 percent. Quayle's ratings were similar (25/56). Clinton's favorable/unfavorable margin was 57/21 with a more than 2 to 1 positive margin. H. Ross Perot was viewed more favorably than unfavorably but by a margin of only 9 percent (35/26). Thirty-nine percent of those surveyed responded either neutrally or had no opinion of Perot. The presidential preferences expressed in the survey were surprising for the large number of "undecideds" and "none of the aboves." Twenty percent of those surveyed indicated that they were undecided with another 11 percent expressing support for none-of-the-above.

Rev. Jesse Jackson retains strong support in the black community. His positives were 77 percent and they outnumbered his negatives by 66 percent. Colin Powell was very positively viewed by those surveyed (67/11) as was Douglas Wilder (56/16). Clarence Thomas's positives outnumbered his negatives (45/30), but of the four black public figures, he had the largest share of unfavorable ratings. When asked whether Clinton should pick Jackson for his running mate, despite Jackson's high positive ratings only 47 percent said *yes*, with 30 percent responding negatively and 23 percent being uncertain.

The Clarence Thomas Nomination. A majority of those surveyed expressed support for Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court. Approvals outnumbered disapprovals by more than 2 to 1 (61 percent to 27 percent). Those who disapproved, however, were more likely to express the intention of voting to punish their U.S. senator if he or she voted contrary to their wishes (65 percent to 25 percent).

Affirmative Action and Military Spending. Seventy-eight percent of those polled agreed that affirmative action should be used in hiring and promotions as a remedy for past employment discrimination; 15 percent disagreed. On shifting savings from military spending cuts to aid U.S. cities, 81 percent in the survey favored such a proposal to 16 percent who were opposed.

Abortion and Safe Sex. On abortion, 33 percent support a woman's right to have an abortion with no restrictions, 47 percent support abortion rights with some restrictions, and 17 percent oppose abortion in all circumstances. An overwhelming 78 percent of those interviewed said they favored free condom programs in high schools to control the spread of AIDS. A lesser majority (53 percent) also favored needle exchange programs to limit the spread of AIDS among intravenous drug users.

Education A Priority. Education is a key issue among black Americans. Thirty-one percent of those surveyed said that education should be the key issue in the presidential election. Furthermore, there is a consistent pattern of wanting change. Half those surveyed (49 percent) think that black children do not receive as good an education as white children. An overwhelming number of people (84 percent) think that the government is spending too little on education, with a similar number (86 percent) favoring equalization of funding across school districts. Responses were mixed to a variety of educational programs and issues. There was substantial support for back-to-basics programs (75 percent), Afrocentric education (80 percent), special schools for young black men (63 percent), and there was a plurality of support for the elimination of tracking in public schools.

National Health Insurance. Support for universal health coverage was nearly universal among those surveyed. Ninety-one percent supported guaranteed health insurance coverage for all Americans.

Fear, Crime, and the Death Penalty. Fifty-three percent of those surveyed indicated that they lived within two or three blocks of an area where they were afraid to walk alone at night. Accompanying this fear was the perception that many young men in their neighborhoods carried guns: 46 percent of those responding said that they thought most or some of the young men in their neighborhood carried guns. About a third of those interviewed said that street gangs were active near their homes. Seventy percent of those surveyed supported a ban on the sale of assault-type weapons and semi-automatic rifles. Forty-eight percent of those surveyed support the death penalty, with 42 percent opposing it. Support for the death penalty is thus considerably less among black Americans than among the general population whose support has been running in the range of over 70 percent.

The L.A. Riots. Only nine percent of those surveyed expressed the opinion that the rioters in Los Angeles were justified because of the **RODNEY KING** verdict. Thirty-six percent expressed generalized condemnation of the riots, feeling that they were not justified regardless of the King verdict. Half those surveyed, however, expressed somewhat ambivalent feelings, indicating that they did not approve of the rioters' behavior, but that they understood their frustration and anger.

"Black" Still Preferred. When those polled were asked how they preferred to describe themselves ethnically, 53 percent preferred the term "black." Thirty-four percent described themselves as "African American," and almost seven percent used the term "person of color." Comparative survey analysis indicates that while "black" is still the preferred term of self-description among black Americans, its use is declining. However, the preference for "African American" has increased significantly over the last two years. In the Joint Center's 1990 annual nationwide survey, a random sample of 759 black Americans were asked to respond to a similar question. In that poll, 72 percent preferred the term "black" and 15 percent preferred "African American."

Do Blacks Need a Third Party?

The Joint Center assembled a panel of political leaders and national commentators to respond to the survey findings. The panel included Joint Center President **EDDIE N. WILLIAMS**, who served as moderator; U.S. Representative **MAXINE WATERS** (D-Cal.); Kansas City Mayor **EMANUEL CLEAVER II**; **KEVIN PHILLIPS**, editor/publisher of *American Political Report*; and George Mason University Professor **ROGER WILKINS**. Wilkins attributed the low approval rating for President Bush among African Americans to the president's continuation of the Reagan administration's hostility to blacks, as demonstrated by the 1988 Willie Horton campaign ad and Bush's reluctant signing of the Civil Rights Act after two years of refusing to do so. Waters was more blunt—she called Bush a racist who has polarized the country. Wilkins said that blacks will not move over to the GOP until its leadership changes its attitudes toward them and becomes committed to the idea that "racial decency will no longer be the monopoly of the Democratic Party."

Two of the panelists exemplified Clinton's broad but qualified support among black leaders. Waters asserted that while she supports Clinton for president, he is the standard bearer "for a party that is trying to get to the White House without looking too black, too female, or too urban." Cleaver, who also supports Clinton, expressed concern that the candidate slipped on the race issue by criticizing singer **SISTER SOULJAH** at a forum convened by Jesse Jackson and endorsing the Crime Bill as a response to the L.A. riot. "Clinton's going to have to make up his mind as to whether he wants to be a president who speaks morally about race," Cleaver said.

Waters saw in the survey findings the basis for the creation of a third party. She asserted that the consistently low number of black Americans who identify as Republicans and the decline in the number of blacks who call themselves Democrats are indications that "the umbrellas of the two major parties aren't big enough to include everyone." She said that if the Democratic Party continues to avoid directly addressing major concerns of black Americans, such as affirmative action and urban problems, the marriage between blacks and the party may have to be dissolved and blacks may have to find political expression in a third party. This may also be true for women, labor organizations, and other groups, she added. Interestingly, as previously mentioned, few of the blacks surveyed embraced the third party candidacy of H. Ross Perot. Mayor Cleaver offered this explanation: "Being conservative by nature, blacks are not prone to go on blind dates."

The Genius Mayor

Mayersville Mayor **UNITA BLACKWELL** is among the 33 recipients of the distinguished MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship for 1992. The veteran civil rights activist and president of the National Conference of Black Mayors will receive a grant of $350,000 over a five-year period to do with as she pleases. Blackwell received the award in recognition for her work in the civil rights movement and her service as mayor. She was responsible for bringing water, housing, and sewage facilities to the small rural town (fewer than 400 residents) that she helped incorporate. She has been mayor of Mayersville since 1976. (Joint Center President Eddie N. Williams received a MacArthur Award in 1988.)

Across the Nation

ALABAMA: Democratic State Senator **EARL HILLIARD** and GOP farmer **KERVIN JONES** from Tuscaloosa, both African Americans, were the victors in the June 30 runoffs of their respective parties' nominations for the 7th congressional district seat. Winning by 51 to 45 percent, Hilliard of Birmingham barely turned back his black senate colleague **HANK SANDERS**. Jones defeated Birmingham businessman and minister **JONATHAN McPHERSON, SR.**, by a 19 percentage point spread. (See June 1992 Across the Nation) Hilliard and Jones will face off in November for the opportunity to be the state's first black member of Congress since Reconstruction.

GEORGIA: Black veteran civil rights activist and Atlanta Congressman **JOHN LEWIS** will be challenged for the Democratic nomination to his 5th congressional district seat by state representative **"ABLE" MABEL THOMAS** in the July 21 primary. A four-term state legislator, Thomas serves on the education, industrial relations, and special judiciary committees. During her tenure in the General Assembly, Thomas has made a name for herself as an outspoken advocate for grassroots community and women's concerns. She has succeeded in getting two major pieces of feminist legislation passed: a bill enacted this year, which requires mandatory coverage of mammograms and PAP smears by insurance companies operating in the state, and the 1989 Rape Shield Act, which prohibits discussion of a victim's sexual history during a rape trial. She has also thrown her support to issues such as low-income housing. Despite her visibility and legislative accomplishments, Thomas is not expected to pose a serious threat to Lewis. Local observers point out that the three-term congressman has acquired a strong track record in constituent services and has distinguished himself in the House Democratic leadership with his appointment last year as a deputy whip.

NORTH CAROLINA: In the May 5 primary, Raleigh city council member **RALPH CAMPBELL, JR.**, narrowly won the Democratic nomination (42 percent of the vote) for state auditor in a three-way contest. A four-term council member and former mayor *pro tem*, Campbell will face white Republican **VERNON ABERNATHY** in the November general election. Campbell, an administrative officer in the state department of insurance, has professional experience as an auditor with the state health benefits office and the department of revenue. The state auditor is responsible for the review of state government financial records and evaluating the economic efficiency of state agencies.

RHODE ISLAND: **NAOMI DAVIS YOUNG**, a black Republican and housing consultant from Providence, is running for the 2nd congressional district seat currently held by white Democratic first-termer **JOHN REED**. Young, who has never held an elective office, is making her second attempt for the congressional seat. She sought the Republican nomination in 1990 but was unable to get the required number of signatures from registered voters to secure a spot on the ballot. She will take on white Coventry businessman **JAMES BILL** in the September 15 primary. The 2nd district has a black population of 4.3 percent.

Also in Providence, three-term black state representative **RAY RICKMAN** is seeking the Democratic nomination for secretary of state. Rickman, 43, sits on the labor committee, has served as executive director of the Providence Human Relations Commission, and is the owner-operator of Cornerstone Books in Providence. Rickman is given a slim chance of defeating the two-term incumbent **KATHLEEN CONNELL**. The 55-year-old Connell has more than 20 years' experience in state and local politics, including stints as a state senator and as a council and school board member in Middletown. The secretary of state oversees a staff of more than 55 with an annual budget of $2.2 million and serves as secretary of the state senate. Other duties include managing the elections, government records, archives, and library divisions of the state government and overseeing corporations and lobbyists.

VIRGINIA: In the June 9 race for the Democratic nomination to the majority black 3rd congressional district, State Senator **ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT** soundly defeated two other black candidates: four-term state delegate **JEAN CUNNINGHAM** and attorney **JACQUELYN EPPS**, both from Richmond. Scott, a Newport News attorney and 14-year veteran of the state legislature, won 67 percent of the vote, greatly outpolling Cunningham and Epps who received 21 and 12 percent of the vote, respectively. In the November general election, he will oppose black Richmond Republican **DAN JENKINS**, a businessman and electronics technician with Philip Morris USA. Jenkins won the party nod over Richmond bail bondsman **FREEMAN McCULLERS** at the Virginia GOP's May 16 state convention. (See April 1992 Across the Nation)

In Northern Virginia, the city of Alexandria's black vice mayor **BILL CLEVELAND** was unsuccessful in his bid for the Republican nomination to the predominantly white 8th congressional district, which includes jurisdictions in the Washington, D.C., suburbs including Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax County. Cleveland came in second with 28 percent of the vote in a three-way battle. White attorney **KYLE McSLARROW** was the victor, winning 54 percent of the vote. (See February-March 1992 Across the Nation)

The Myth of Homogeneous Japan

Japan's Biggest Minority Group, the Burakumin, Fights Discrimination Based on the Legacy of a Feudal Social Class System

by Yasumasa Hirasawa

The following is an edited version of a speech given by Dr. Hirasawa on May 5 at a symposium sponsored by the Joint Center's U.S.-Japan Project in collaboration with the National Intercultural Education Leadership Institute at the University of Maryland.

In some product areas like cars and consumer electronics, Japan may be more successful than the United States. But when it comes to its capacity to accommodate diversity as a source of national strength, Japan and its people do not have a good record. Japanese society has forcibly assimilated the indigenous Ainu people who inhabited Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan; colonized Koreans in the early 20th century, treating them like second-class citizens in their own land; and has also refused to open Japan to refugees and migrant workers from abroad. Domestically, the Japanese society has created finely tuned systems of social stratification in which vestiges of the caste-like status system are the most infamous. Burakumin or Buraku people are victims of that status system. Japan as a "homogeneous nation" is a myth created in this historical context, and that myth has disturbed both domestic minorities and Japan's relationship with other countries.

Many Japanese companies saw no shame in not hiring minorities when they set up plants in the U.S., violating American affirmative action guidelines. Japanese businesses have not only brought capital and technologies with them to the United States, but also troublesome mindsets that are conducive to discrimination against minority populations and women.

The Buraku People: Outcasts by Command

Burakumin or the Buraku people are the largest minority population in Japan, residing in about 6,000 communities nationwide, and with a population size of about three million. They are physically and ethnically indistinguishable from other Japanese people. They speak the same language, have no discernible accents. Except by checking their kinship origin, residential location, or occupations, Burakumin appear to be like other Japanese.

The origin of today's Burakumin can be traced back to the early 17th century when the feudal lord created a four-tier class system similar to the Indian caste system. The Samurai or warrior class constituted the ruling class, followed by the Nomin, farmers; the Komin, craftsmen; and the Shonin, the commercial class. The traditional term for Burakumin was "Eta," a class below the other classes, referring to an outcast population. Like the term "Nigger," Eta is derogatory and literally means "filth-abundant" people. Burakumin came from various social backgrounds—such as peasants, hide-tanners, and shrine servants. But once the status system was established, the outcast people were forcibly settled in areas almost inhabitable, such as under cliffs, in swamp areas, or on river beds and forced to do such socially hated jobs as disposing of dead cattle and horses or arresting and executing criminals.

In many societies, slaves, immigrants, certain ethnic groups, and other minorities have traditionally been made to engage in peripheral "3D" jobs—demanding, dirty, and dangerous. In the case of feudal Japan, the outcast category was created within the Japanese population to serve social needs. They had no land to cultivate but provided their labor to nearby farmers. There was also a political intention to creating this outcast group. The presence of the poor and ostracized outcast made it harder for the exploited majority—peasants, who constituted 80 percent of the total population—to view their social position objectively. They could comfort themselves by saying, "at least we are not the most miserable."

Today some urban Buraku communities are big, with more than 10,000 people; other small ones have only a couple of households and are mostly concentrated in the western part of Japan. Although the Emancipation Edict was issued in 1871, no substantive measures were enforced to redress past inequalities. A vicious cycle of poverty, underachievement in schools, and limited job opportunities continued. It was not until 1965 that the central government officially admitted that Buraku discrimination was still alive.

Buraku community improvement measures have been implemented for nearly 30 years, and now the appearance of most Buraku communities is not much different from non-Buraku communities. However, when it comes to occupational and educational achievement, there are still some significant differences between the two. The rate of advance to colleges and universities for Buraku students is about half the national average. The high school dropout rate is two to three times higher among Burakumin than

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Japan

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non-Burakumin, and employment and marriage-related discrimination against Buraku people are still common. Today, detective agencies are employed by families and employers to trace the ancestral origins of prospective employees or marriage partners. Data banks are maintained and computer lists of the names of those believed to be of Buraku origin are secretly purchased.

Low Marks on Human Rights

Japan has grown rich and is now expected to play a more prominent political leadership role among the community of nations. But Japan's economic success has been built upon the sacrifice of workers who can only live in homes not much better than rabbit hutches, even if they work more than 2,000 hours a year. Average workers cannot not even buy their own homes because the price of land has skyrocketed. These are the people who work hard and with dignity to build a better life for their families and communities.

Of course, some overall human progress has been made as the result of community-based movements by Burakumin themselves. Since 1922, liberation movements known as Suiheisha (or "the Levelers") have been vital to the Buraku people, resulting in powerful coalitions. But the human rights record of Japan received a rather poor grade from the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations. And Rev. Jesse Jackson has said that Japan is a human rights deficit nation.

School Initiatives to End Discrimination

The movement towards Dowa ("Integration") in education started after World War II under the new democratic constitution of Japan. Initially led by only a small number of committed teachers who worked with Buraku children, the Dowa education movement today is a most influential agent for change in Japanese education.

In the early 1950s, many Buraku children were not enrolled in schools. Consequently, Buraku parents did not place high expectations on education because of the educational system's tradition of discouraging Buraku students from employment opportunities, especially if they were high-achievers. The first task of the Dowa education, then, was to attain equal educational opportunities for Buraku children.

The second task was to improve school curricula and teaching practices. Up until the 1970s, the school textbooks officially sanctioned by the Ministry of Education had made no mention of the Burakumin or their historical origin. Efforts were made to include Buraku-related reading and historical materials in school curricula. At the same time, additional teachers were assigned to schools that enrolled Buraku children. These teachers monitor the learning of Buraku children in regular classes or offer "special pull-out compensatory classes," tutorial classes which augment students' possible weak areas of study.

The third task involved strengthening the ties between the Buraku communities and schools. Since the Burakumin have historically been segregated and scattered into different areas, the Burakumin movements strongly rely on community-level participation. Teachers frequently visit student's homes to understand the life of Buraku children better and to maintain frequent communication with parents. In the evening, children gather at the community center to learn the history and issues of the Buraku movements, do their homework, and get supplementary tutoring from community workers and teachers from the school.

The fourth task of Dowa education was to develop innovative approaches to studying Buraku history. In the past, when Buraku issues were discussed in classrooms, teachers frequently emphasized the misery and suffering of the Buraku people. This just discouraged Buraku children rather than empowered them.

In Dowa education, the focus shifted to the historical contributions of discriminated-against people. For instance, in medieval Japan, marginalized people created the prototypes of Noh and Kabuki, two traditional forms of drama, and built beautiful rock gardens that are major tourist attractions in Japan. Marginalized people defended their human dignity courageously, even under severe discrimination. In a way, they nurtured the foundation of Japanese democracy.

Toward Global Citizenship

Today more Japanese are becoming aware that globalization is not just making direct investment and exporting products, but also becoming good corporate citizens and perceptive of local values. Japanese officials have learned from recent international criticism that they need to be more sensitive to the human dignity of others.

Members of the Human Rights Education Network (HRE), an educational organization based in Osaka and committed to addressing problems in global education, feel there is a need to transform the image Japanese citizens have of American minorities. The image of blacks in the Japanese media often accompanies images of crime, poverty, and drugs.

Most Japanese are not aware that there are many black mayors, scholars, corporate executives, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, and that most blacks are hard-working people who are committed to their families. Michael Jackson, Eddie Murphy, and Magic Johnson are not the only successful black role models. Therefore, it is important to include in the curriculum of Japanese schools materials that portray the strength of diversity in the United States and the important contributions made by minorities.

HRE members are also interested in examining how Americans promote tolerance and learn from those of different backgrounds. These attributes will be important if a new generation of Japanese is to learn to respect the dignity of all peoples and cultivate global peace. ■

Racism in the 1990s: A Policy Challenge

The High Jobless Rate and Today's Subtler Forms of Discrimination Have Complicated the Fight for Equality

by Margaret C. Simms

In the wake of the Los Angeles riots, the Joint Center received numerous calls from members of the media basically asking—"What Do You People Want?" That question is reminiscent of queries by whites in the 1960s in response to the civil rights struggle. Another related question is whether anything has changed in terms of racial progress since that time.

In fact, much has changed. But some of the changes have made it harder to combat racism in the 1990s, in part because the problem is more subtle than it was three decades ago, and in part because racism is more resilient than anyone thought it would be. In addition, racism has been exacerbated by the adverse economic climate.

Few Jobs and a Glass Ceiling

The gains that blacks have made as a result of the enforcement of the civil rights laws enacted in the 1960s are reflected in the increasing educational attainment of the black population, in particular the tripling of the proportion of the population with college degrees since 1960. These educational gains, along with the effects of two decades of affirmative action, have resulted in a sharply expanded occupational distribution for employed blacks. Consequently, the proportion of blacks with incomes above the median for U.S. households has risen. Young black married couples heading families with two earners are now approaching at least short-term parity with their white counterparts.

But economic equity at the beginning of family life may not hold up over the course of a lifetime because of continuing racial (and gender) barriers to upward mobility. Affirmative action and equal employment laws have been most effective in reducing racism in jobs where objective measures of productivity and concrete comparisons of qualifications are possible. Thus, both entry-level white-collar and blue-collar jobs have been areas of advancement. However, evidence from studies of the "glass ceiling" phenomenon, (including those recently released by the U.S. Labor Department), show quite clearly that movement into upper management and partnership positions is hampered by the inability of minorities and women to "measure up" on subjective criteria such as "compatibility with other managers" and their ability to be "rainmakers" (generate clients and income for the firm).

This problem is compounded by the fact that economic gains have not been evenly spread throughout the black community. While a portion of the black population has benefitted from civil rights legislation and government programs that have made it easier to attain a college education and enter high-wage employment, a significant proportion of the black community remains in poverty. Moreover, some of the black poor have a greater sense of hopelessness than was the case a generation ago.

The fact that fully one-third of black Americans are poor while the black middle class is growing leads some to the conclusion that those who do not advance have personal deficiencies—they "need stronger family values" or "lack individual initiative." As the argument goes, these people are not making progress because they are not taking advantage of educational opportunities nor are they applying for the "many jobs available." Therefore, our remaining problems are ones of "class" and not race.

This class argument is reinforced by the decline in real earnings for young workers of all races, a result of the lower wages and higher joblessness that have accompanied changes in the U.S. economy. But class bonding between blacks and whites is not what has come out of the recent adverse economic experiences of young whites. Instead of seeing their joblessness and lower incomes resulting from slow economic growth and ineffective economic policy, a substantial proportion of the white group sees it as a consequence of affirmative action—a zero-sum game where blacks are advancing at the expense of whites. However, statistics show blacks lagging significantly behind whites in hiring and promotions at virtually every economic level.

Same Goal, New Obstacles

Economic and political obstacles to racial equality are further exacerbated by the growing diversity of the U.S. population. Instead of a black-white issue, racism and discrimination have become multi-ethnic phenomena. The strategies to fight racism developed in the environment of the 1960s and 1970s may not be effective today. The challenge is to find ways of pursuing racial justice in a society where the remaining barriers are obscured by the progress of some blacks, and where white resistance to affirmative action is perceived as self-preservation. The task is not impossible, but we must approach it recognizing that while the goal of racial equality has not changed, there are new obstacles to achieving that goal. ■

This article is based on a presentation by Dr. Simms before the Association of Black Foundation Executives in New York City on June 13. Dr. Simms is an economist and director of research programs at the Joint Center.

Welfare

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preventative health care. She also has proposed community service for those who are not in job training.

And although Maryland has cut grants seven percent in the last year and trimmed general assistance for the disabled—largely because of Maryland's poor economy—Colvin says she disagrees with Bryant and others that eliminating benefits is the best way to push people toward self-sufficiency. "The benefit level is so inadequate that it never provides sufficient margin to allow people to pull themselves out of the depths of poverty," Colvin says. "We have to remember the reasons for AFDC—to provide for the dependent child."

Washington state has implemented what many consider one of the more responsive reform initiatives. Its voluntary Family Independence Program (FIP) relies more on the carrot than the stick. FIP works with AFDC families to develop long-term self-sufficiency, providing for child care for parents attending school or job training classes or busy searching for jobs. FIP also coordinates with the Employment Services Department and other state agencies to encourage clients to take advantage of employment and training opportunities. Teen mothers are encouraged to stay in school and participate in available courses on parenting skills. Once a welfare recipient gets a job, transitional child care and medical services are extended for up to a year.

Ruth Massinga, chief executive of the Casey Family Programs, a Seattle-based family preservation organization, urges caution and methodical evaluation of each change in welfare programs rather than a headlong push for reform when it is not at all clear whether some of the proposed changes will be helpful or devastating to families. "We have always taken a carrot and stick approach," says Massinga. "But we have to focus more on figuring out what are the right carrots and what will be their effects?" ■

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